

Built At Light Speed

These days, Internet companies are hoarding their cash and downsizing their workforce. That's not the case at Swiftcomm of Riverside.

By Becky Bergman

When Rick Liuag first approached investors in the latter part of 1999 about his Internet broadband startup, it might have been easy to scoff at the man.

After all, it was the Internet's heyday and it seemed like every cash-strapped, wannabe CEO had a great idea that could start a revolution and make even the company janitor a millionaire.

Lucky for Riverside, investors recognized a few smart people and a really good idea in Swiftcomm Inc. The Riverside-based company has secured two rounds of funding for \$8 million. And is now in its third and final round of funding, which will net them another \$5 million. Liuag says a good part of the capital will go to funding the company's new 22,000-square-foot data center in Riverside. He also says that there are plans to add up to 20 more employees this year.

That's good news for the folks in Riverside. Swiftcomm is working to meet the demand for

broadband Internet access and data center services for a range of businesses in the Riverside region. The company is deploying a fixed wireless network to connect buildings to the Internet. And Swiftcomm's services allow businesses to access the Internet at synchronous speeds scalable from 400 kb and above.

Meanwhile, its 22,000-square-foot data center will be the first of its kind in the Inland Empire. With an expected completion date this spring, the center will offer data storage and a variety of other services for Riverside customers.

"For Riverside to compete for technology jobs, we need last mile connectivity to our businesses," says Riverside Mayor Ron Loveridge, who toured the offices of Swiftcomm last fall. "Swiftcomm is one more arrow in our economic

development's quiver that can satisfy the need for affordable high-speed Internet access to businesses in Riverside."

Swiftcomm, which began late last year to beam high-speed Internet to business parks, has been in operation for several months. More than 100 buildings are under contract and several customers are online with the wireless technology.

Poster child for Riverside development

As Riverside city and county officials work to transform the region from a pit stop for travelers into a destination for the state's tech businesses, they must be prepared to offer the infrastructure that's needed to support the companies.

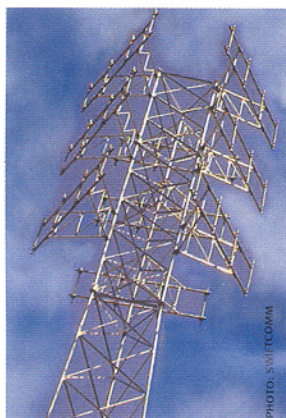
Liuag knows a thing or two about Riverside's telecom infrastructure. Prior to Swiftcomm, Liuag headed up the Inland Empire sales department for Yipes Communications, a San Francisco-based Internet service provider. While at Yipes, he says he noticed a greater need for high-speed Internet access for businesses located in the growing metro region of Riverside.

Liuag got his start in the telecommunications industry in 1980 when he worked as a sales representative and later in management for MCI in Atlanta. Liuag formed long distance provider WCN in 1989 and later sold it in 1993 to WCT for \$100 million. All of this telecom and Internet background helped to crystallize his vision for blanketing Riverside with broadband services.

"For many companies, high-speed Internet is as essential to their business as electricity," says Liuag. "Without it, they won't want to relocate to Riverside."

Chris Buydos, head of Economic Development and Real Estate Services for the University of California, Riverside, agrees with Liuag that the area needs high connectivity to make it attractive for businesses to come to Riverside. And Buydos is a proponent of Swiftcomm.

"They got their funding from local investors, started up in Riverside, and created a business that helps to bring other companies to the area," says Buydos.



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